

## A George Washington Guard From West Street

By SHEILA LYNCH-BENTTINEN

**W**e know the main thoroughfare in our town of Duxbury is called Washington Street in honor of our first president, whose birthday was last week, but did you know that one of the "Revolutionary War Guards" who protected George Washington through the Revolutionary War was from Duxbury? I found this out through coincidence, and in honor of Presidents Day and Washington's

Birthday I thought I would share this story.

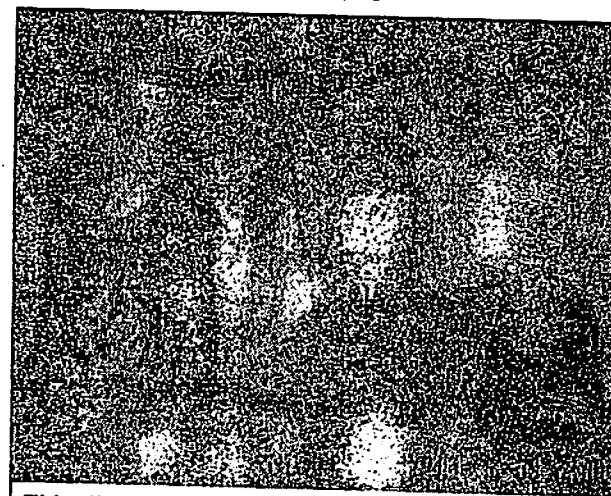
In 1997 my husband and I decided to buy a house on the South Shore. We had no intention of buying an antique house, as we were just looking around for anything that caught our fancy, within our budget. A real estate agent gave us a list of places to view. One Saturday in May I must have looked at 15 places, when I passed two signs on one house, "Eggs for Sale," and "House for Sale" on the corner of West and Temple streets. The house was not on the list of places to view, but I decided to explore it. Walking up to the house and being greeted by the owners it was clear it was an old house. After being shown around, I had a very strong "feeling" that this house had something to do with the Revolutionary War. I told my husband that night that I think I found a house we would like, it was very old, and with no dating or history of the house available, I thought it had something to do with the Revolutionary War.

In July we bought the house, and we moved in September. The next year I thought it would be fun to research the history of the house in my spare time, of which there was not much. I went to the Plymouth Courthouse to research past deeds, which for those of you who have done it, can be an exercise of endless fascination, frustration, education, and dead ends. I came to a dead end in the dating in the late 1800s, even though I had visited the DR&HS map collection, and had the last name and first initial of owners in 1857 and 1833. I then decided I was not an antiquarian researcher by profession, and hired a very amiable team to find the missing history of the house. After a year between their other work, they also came to a dead end, which they said rarely happens. At that point I decided the mystery was going to stay a mystery.

In 2004 I received a telephone message from Bob Dente, who besides being a real estate agent, has taken a passion to the history of the town and date boarding. He left a message that he had some spare time, and he would like to date board our house. Because of my previous experience I decided to

ignore the message, but being resourceful he called again. I then called him back and explained that I doubted he could solve it, which was laid down as a challenge. It wasn't long before he came back with a date and name of 1823 and Jedidiah Bartin. I was surprised, and I must admit disappointed that the house was not Revolutionary War vintage because of my earlier "feelings."

I decided to research Jedidiah Bartin a little more and found what I was looking for. Jedidiah Bartin and his wife Sally Weston were both sixth generation descendants of John and Priscilla Alden. Jedidiah Bartin was one of four sons of John Bartin and Abigail Simmons. John Bartin was born in England in 1759 and came to live in Duxbury as a youth. I found he was in a book, *The Commander In Chief's Guard: Revolutionary War*, by Carlos Godfrey, which I had learned about through the Barton (Bartin) family web pages.



This flag was carried by George Washington's bodyguards during the Revolutionary War. This is also probably the best example of the uniform worn by the elite group.

It is a fascinating book about the elite guard troop of George Washington that served close to him throughout the war, and John Bartin, an illiterate 17-year-old Duxbury farmer served in many major battles right next to Washington. It has his signature in the book marked with an X and someone else's writing.

George Washington's elite guard was formed on March 12, 1776 after an assassination attempt on Washington, where he directed "the formation of a corps of sober, intelligent, and reliable men, detailed from various regiments of infantry men then stationed in Cambridge Mass., to be known as the Commander in Chief's Guard. He further specified that the men selected should be between five feet eight inches and five feet ten inches, well drilled, and handsomely built." They wore very particular

fancy uniforms that had to be clean as much as possible. They stayed close to the general throughout the war, and always protected him from harm. All the valuable papers of the Guard were destroyed in a fire at the Charlestown Navy Yard in 1815.

John Bartin's entry in the book:

"Barton, John: Enlisted, Duxbury Mass. January 1, 1776 for one year, a private. Captain Samuel Bradford's Company. Twenty Third regiment Continental Infantry, commanded by John Bailey; re-enlisted May 15th 1777, for the war, captain Joseph Wadsworth's company, Fourteenth Massachusetts Regiment commanded by Colonel Gamaliel Bradford; deserted Dec. 15th. rejoined Feb 1, 1779, and transferred to Captain Zebulon King's Company; transferred, West Point, N.Y., Nov. 1 1779 to Commander in Chief's Guard commanded by Major Caleb Gibbs; at the battle of Connecticut Farms N.J., June 7th 1780; skirmish of King's Bridge, N.Y., July 3 1781, battle of Yorktown, VA, Oct. 19, 1781; sick at New Windsor Hospital, N.Y. June 6th 1783, until the ratification of the definite treaty of peace, discharged November 3, 1783.

BORN England, 1759; occupation, farmer, married Abigail Simmons (born Duxbury, Mass. May 24th, 1753; died Duxbury Mass., November 6 1807) 1784; died Duxbury Mass., December 20th 1835, with the following issue: George Washington born, Duxbury MA, July 23, 1785; John Douglas born, Duxbury MA, Feb. 9, 1788; Jedediah, born Duxbury, Mass. December 31, 1789 (married Sally Weston); Anderson, born Duxbury, Mass., Feb 17th 1793, and died October 6th 1796; and Matthew, born Duxbury, Mass. September 2, 1795."

So maybe my feeling had to do with a distinguished Revolutionary War veteran who was later a widowed grandfather visiting his only grandchildren for 15 years at our house!

Either way I thought you would like to know that a Duxbury resident was a member of George Washington's elite guard. Now on Washington's Birthday, which also happens to be my daughter's birthday, we also toast the 17-year-old John Bartin who left Duxbury to join the Revolutionary War, ended up guarding George Washington, and then came back to Duxbury where he lived the rest of his days.

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